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## Utilizing Centers for Teaching and Learning to Support Dual Enrollment Educators

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# Utilizing Centers for Teaching and Learning to Support Dual Enrollment Educators

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## Abstract

Across the country, many states are expanding their support for and implementation of Dual Enrollment programs, seeing them as opportunities to encourage students to go on to college—particularly those who historically might have had less opportunity and/or encouragement. As these programs expand, so does the need for professional development for the educators who teach this widening and increasingly diverse student population. As documented in several studies, educator professional development is critical to the quality and equity of Dual Enrollment courses; however, research has shown that training for these educators is not always timely, consistent, or robust. To address this challenge, our institutions have found value in leveraging Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTLs) to help fill this professional development gap. In this manuscript, we share examples of how CTLs at our respective institutions have supported the training of Current Enrollment instructors to ensure successful and inclusive teaching and learning in these courses.

**Keywords:** dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, centers for teaching and learning, training, inclusive teaching

## Introduction

For several decades, the number of students taking college courses while still in high school has trended upward (Taylor et al., 2022). Current research suggests that one in three high school students participate in some kind of college in high school option (Taylor et al., 2022); similarly, the Community College Research Center reports that dual enrollment participation nearly doubled between 2011 and 2021 and is experiencing ongoing growth (Fink & Jenkins, 2023). These increased numbers are due in part to increased state support for such opportunities. According to The College in High School Alliance (2019), in “2019 alone, 18 governors discussed earning college credit prior to high school graduation in their state budget highlights and new laws passed in more than 16 states [addressed] some aspect of college in high school programs” (p. 2). In many of these instances, legislators are championing approaches that increase certificate and degree completion along with workforce readiness, with a special focus on expanding access to students who historically might have had limited educational opportunities.

College in high school programs, broadly referred to as Dual Enrollment (DE), differ in many ways (e.g., name, design, financial support, delivery, access), but are similar in that they consist of educators working with students in liminal spaces where college and high school expectations converge. Depending upon the state and the type of program, DE educators might be comprised of college faculty, adjunct faculty, supervised teaching assistants, high school instructors who meet a minimum credentialing requirement, and/or a combination of any of the examples just described. While research rightfully has and continues to probe the DE student experience, less emphasis has been placed on DE educators’ experiences, training, ongoing professional development, and support (Duchon & Relles, 2020; Mollet et al., 2020; Denecker, 2023). Yet these educators are integral to the DE equation and ultimately, student success (Bishop-Clark et al., 2010). Among their recommendations, researchers at the Community College Research Center (2024) include “support[ing] student success through high quality instruction” (p. 2) as a way to ensure historically underrepresented and marginalized populations are provided equitable DE experiences.

This manuscript examines the current literature regarding the training and support of DE educators—specifically high school instructors delivering DE in secondary settings—for the purposes of establishing the ongoing need for programs to invest in this work. Included in the discussion is the potential for higher education institutions to utilize Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTLs) to undergird the professional development needs of DE educators and equip them to create robust, inclusive learning spaces for all students. Specifically, this manuscript outlines how Concurrent Enrollment Programs can leverage the expertise of their CTLs in order to build meaningful professional opportunities that support those who carry out DE instruction. A case-study approach provides several examples where CTLs and Concurrent Enrollment

Programs have successfully partnered. The manuscript closes with additional recommendations for fostering student success through these kinds of collaborations.

## Literature Review

Annually, upwards of 1.5 million students participate in DE courses (Taie & Lewis, 2020), with about 80% of them earning their DE credits at their high school campuses (Shivji & Wilson, 2019). Unfortunately, growth in DE “has not translated to equitable opportunity for all students” (Taylor et al., 2022, p. 5). Recent data demonstrates that participation in DE by Hispanic and Black students continues to lag behind that of Asian and White students; additionally, students with disabilities and English Language Learners are also less likely to participate in DE (Fink, 2021a; Xu et al, 2021; Fink, 2021b). Moreover, while research indicates that minoritized students and those of low socioeconomic status “can and do succeed when given the opportunity to engage in college-level work in high school” (College in High School Alliance, 2019, p.6), the fact is that not all DE programs are created equally. In *Unlocking Potential* (2019), the College in High School Alliance (CHSA) and Level Up assert that “College in high school programs can only give students a leg up if they can be confident that the courses they complete will help move them successfully towards a degree or credential. Access without quality and alignment does not create opportunity” (p.15).

Therefore, as CHSA (2019) points out, quality instruction is one way to ameliorate equity gaps in DE. Research into partnerships that actively and intentionally seek to support underserved populations indicates a commitment by some colleges and high school DE partners to what Fink and Jenkins (2023) call Dual Enrollment Equity Pathways (DEEP). Specifically, among the four areas of DEEP practice is attention to “high quality college instruction and academic support” (Fink & Jenkins, 2023, p. 10). The authors explain that this includes collaboration between college faculty and high school instructors to ensure students are provided rigorous yet supportive educational environments designed to meet students’ specific needs as learners. For example, instead of a focus on college courses as a place where students simply attain content knowledge, DEEP reframes the attention to that of teaching and learning. In other words, instructors are challenged to consider what are the best pedagogical approaches for teaching the outcomes of the course to the particular group of students that populates their classroom. Beyond bolstering student success, a DEEP approach to teaching and learning builds students’ confidence in their abilities to thrive in academic settings (Fink & Jenkins, 2023). Rhine (2022) also points to quality instruction and “cross-sector collaboration” as a key strategy in providing equitable DE experiences for students (par. 11).

The most prominent delivery method for DE is on the high school campus, with certified high school teachers serving as instructors of college coursework (Shivji & Wilson, 2019). Known as Concurrent Enrollment, this type of DE often depends upon the interchange between the high

school teachers (dubbed Concurrent Enrollment Instructors or CEIs) and their counterparts—college Faculty Liaisons (FLs) who are discipline-specific experts from the degree-granting institution. Depending on the partnership, CEIs receive varying levels of support from their FLs (Duncheon & Relles, 2020; Mollet et al., 2020). If DEEP models guide a program, then the likelihood of quality instruction is enhanced, since CEIs and FLs work together to ensure sound pedagogical approaches. In terms of equitable approaches, Aspen Institute’s Dual Enrollment Playbook (2021) corroborates the DEEP approach by arguing that the best partnerships “involve collaboration between college and high school faculty members to align curricula, strengthen pedagogy, and ensure course outcomes are met” (p. 45).

These collaborations foster understanding and communication that help smooth secondary-postsecondary cultural, curricular, structural, and pedagogical differences that can impede Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships. As Mollet et al. (2020) point out, when it comes to PK12 and higher education, each entity has differing systems and requirements; thus, more open dialogue between high school and college faculty can serve to best identify solutions to support student learning. It is in these spaces of collaboration and dialogue, says Leahey (2016), that CEIs and FLs are afforded the freedom to explore the best of one another’s practices, which is important to achieving and maintaining quality instruction. According to Conrey and Nappa-Carroll (2021), when CEIs and FLs engage in the “mutual exchange of ideas and expertise,” the result is “equitable mentorship” (p. 247), which serves to break down secondary-postsecondary hierarchies and reposition the instructors as colleagues who determine together how best to deliver curricula.

While the literature supports collaborative efforts among CEIs and FLs to assure quality and make DE more equitable, the fact remains that FLs are tasked with a variety of responsibilities in the CEI-FL relationship. For example, in the Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) program (and others like it), FLs review instructor credentials, assist in syllabus development, and craft as well as deliver intensive, initial training for CEIs that can be a week in length, so that deep discussions regarding the theory and pedagogy that undergird a course can occur (Denecker, 2023; Conrey & Nappa-Carroll, 2021). Additionally, FLs plan and organize annual professional development opportunities, conduct site visits, and provide ongoing mentoring and support to new and seasoned CEIs as needed (Denecker, 2023; Conrey & Nappa-Carroll, 2021). Through these various means of professional development, FLs and their CEIs can better assure quality instruction for all students. However, not all FLs have experience in building professional development opportunities for others, and finding the time and resources to do so is not easy. With that said, it is incumbent that leaders of Concurrent Enrollment Programs “demonstrate their commitment [to this work] by providing adequate time and resources for instructors to learn from one another” (Denecker, 2023, pp. 63-64).

Fortunately, many college campuses have a ready resource to support FLs in planning and facilitating professional development opportunities: their Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). CTLs provide higher education institutions with a wide range of support designed to develop and enhance curriculum, assessment, and instruction (Beach et al., 2016; Wright, 2023). CTL staff often work one-on-one with faculty, offering consultations, classroom observations, and other services based on an instructor's particular needs. They also host group events like new faculty orientation, workshops on evidence-based teaching practices, and faculty learning communities. Regardless of the type of support, the work of CTLs is often driven by institutional goals and strategic plans. As described in a 2018 *Inside Higher Ed* article, "Institutions...position [CTLs] to disseminate campus wide strategies and to actively pursue and encourage projects that improve classroom experiences for students." (Lieberman, 2018, para. 4).

CTLs are given this charge based on the expertise of their staff and the research around the effectiveness of their work. Various studies have found that faculty who participate in CTL programs utilize more effective teaching practices—and more importantly, those practices lead to improved student outcomes (Condon et al., 2016; Gibbs & Coffey, 2004; Finelli et al., 2008). Thus, with a combination of experience supporting effective teaching and advancing institutional goals, CTLs are well poised to aid college faculty and high school educators in ensuring parity in instruction in DE courses.

## Case Studies

### Introduction

Boise State University is an R2, four-year public university in the Northwest, with over 7,000 CE students per year, nearly 200 instructors, and 60 FLs. University of Findlay is a rural, 4-year private institution in the Midwest, with approximately 2,000 CE students, over 80 instructors, and 26 FLs. While the institutional settings are not the same, the challenges in supporting CEIs are similar. For example, both programs have partnerships across the state, in multiple school districts. Both have rural and urban students in school districts with differing educational foci and financial resources. As a result, our FLs must be creative in their support of CEIs to ensure parity of learning across various educational contexts.

One way to ensure quality is to follow the sixteen standards for effective Concurrent Enrollment Programs set forth by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), many of which include specifics regarding the preparation and ongoing support of CEIs. NACEP is the only national accrediting body for DE, and 20 states either utilize or have adapted its standards (NACEP, 2020). Among the standards is a focus on the quality and rigor of coursework as well as the ongoing professional development of CEIs. Boise State and Findlay are both NACEP-accredited organizations.

At Boise State, the CTL and Concurrent Enrollment Program started partnering in 2016, prompted by the program's NACEP re-accreditation process. As she collected materials for the re-accreditation, the Concurrent Enrollment Program Director recognized the need for more training and support for FLs in order for the program to meet the accreditation standards related to parity of assessment, CEI observation and annual professional development. Consequently, the director reached out to the CTL Director for advice and partnership. That began a collaboration between the CTL and the Concurrent Enrollment Program that NACEP reviewers called "a best practice in concurrent enrollment program administration" (NACEP, 2017).

Findlay's CTL began partnering with the institution's Concurrent Enrollment Program informally when Christine became director of the CTL in 2013 while continuing to serve as an FL for high school instructors teaching College Writing I. This relationship grew more robust as Christine moved into an administrative role that found her overseeing both the CTL and Concurrent Enrollment at Findlay.

What follows are examples of how our CTLs utilized our expertise and resources to help support and facilitate the Concurrent Enrollment Programs at our respective institutions. These case studies reference the NACEP standards, not only because they are relevant to DE but also because they promote the kind of effective, quality teaching and learning practices for which CTLs advocate and student equity demands.

## Training for Faculty Liaisons

FLs are identified and chosen based on their knowledge of the college coursework and their interest in partnering with a CEI to translate that work to the high school classroom. However, as noted earlier, the FL might not have much experience working with other educators to align syllabi and assessments in ways that ensure parity in instruction between the high school and college classroom. As the examples below demonstrate, this is where Concurrent Enrollment Programs can draw on the expertise of CTLs, whose staff often have experience working with faculty at the department level to align curriculum and assessments (Beach et al., 2016; Wright, 2023).

### Boise State University

As part of the NACEP re-accreditation process, the Concurrent Enrollment Director identified that it would be useful to have an annual training for all FLs (continuing and new) to review important aspects of the NACEP standards and provide time for collaboration and idea-sharing among colleagues. Therefore, starting in 2016, Teresa developed an annual, three-hour training

for all FLs that included administrative updates from the Concurrent Enrollment Director, and mini-workshops on topics including:

- required syllabus elements;
- aligning language between the high school and university syllabi;
- aligning assessments between the high school and university courses;
- conducting classroom observations;
- planning professional development; and
- orienting new CEIs.

These topics were chosen in alignment with the NACEP standards but were also important to foster equity in the Concurrent Enrollment courses. As noted by Kayla Patrick (2019), one step in ensuring equity in DE courses is that the college and high school courses “use the same syllabi and exams as comparable courses taught on college campuses.” After participating in these training, FLs reported planning to make changes to their work with CEIs, including “I will create a syllabus template for us all.”

#### University of Findlay

In 2019, Christine established a Lead FL position for the Concurrent Enrollment Program. This role was modeled on other successful programs within the CTL where faculty members serve as mentors to faculty new to the institution, as well as faculty who are preparing dossiers for tenure and promotion. The Lead FL is an established full-professor who has worked with CEIs for over a decade. Her experience as an FL and the respect of her colleagues made her a natural choice for assisting other FLs in their work with CEIs. She is granted release time from teaching to work closely with the 26 FLs in the program to ensure that they are aware of and are supported in their responsibilities to provide CEIs with an orientation to the course, annual professional development opportunities, and feedback via site visits as outlined in NACEP Standards F2, F3, and C3. In addition, quarterly meetings are held in which Christine and the Lead FL facilitate collaborative conversations with the FLs on topics like:

- how to build professional relationships with CEIs, and what to do when conflict arises;
- best practices for planning the course orientation;
- annual professional development meetings; and
- resource sharing.

The Lead FL also works with the CTL Director to draft a monthly newsletter that keeps FLs apprised of local, state, and national DE updates and provides reminders of responsibilities, such as reviewing and submitting syllabi, setting dates for summer retraining sessions, and reaching out to CEIs to set up site visits, among others.



## Annual Professional Development

NACEP standard F3 requires that all CEIs “participate in college/university provided annual discipline-specific professional development and ongoing collegial interaction to further enhance instructors' pedagogy and breadth of knowledge in the discipline” (NACEP, 2020, p. ii). As the subject experts, these trainings are ideally planned and led by FLs, but not all faculty have experience planning professional development for their colleagues. Fortunately, many CTLs are charged with planning their institutions' New Faculty Orientation and other regular professional development offerings (Beach et al., 2016; Crowder & Monfared, 2020; Wright, 2023), so this is an area where CTL staff have experience upon which FLs can draw.

### Boise State University

Teresa worked with FLs across disciplines to plan annual professional development for their CEIs. This support included:

- facilitating discussions after attending subject matter expert presentations at the University;
- leading resource-sharing sessions in which CEIs and their FL brainstormed ways to help students understand challenging topics;
- facilitating workshops on topics like active learning, transparent assessments, and assessment design; and
- sharing resources on timely initiatives like the use of Open Educational Resources.

In one instance, the CTL brought together all of the CEIs teaching science courses, and provided a two day workshop on integrating active learning strategies and effective assessment techniques. In their post-event evaluation forms, all 22 participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they “gained new/enhanced knowledge/skills” that they could use.

### Findlay University

In 2020's moment of rapid change, the relationship between the CTL and the Lead FL allowed for easy leveraging of new approaches to training and supporting CEIs after years of traditional face-to-face, on-campus training models. Specifically, in Summer 2020, several FLs turned to Findlay's learning management system (Canvas) to create professional development modules for CEIs due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This work was made possible by the just-in-time training the FLs were receiving from the CTL in their roles as faculty members. The result was a trickle-down effect where faculty who served as FLs took what they learned through CTL training and modified their annual professional development meetings with CEIs to a synchronous Zoom format. Thanks to these “a-ha moments” that resulted from COVID innovations, more FLs developed Canvas spaces where materials are now easily accessible to CEIs, and more frequent interactions between FLs and CEIs now occur in Zoom spaces

throughout the academic year. Likewise, ideas for reaching CEIs during the pandemic served to inform how the CTL worked with adjunct faculty, resulting in an annual “Kick-Start Your Courses” event held each July. This event provides opportunities for new full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and CEIs to receive additional synchronous remote support as they build their syllabi and Canvas spaces and as they prepare for the first day of classes.

## Classroom Observation Support

An important way Concurrent Enrollment Programs ensure the integrity of the courses taught in the high schools is for FLs to conduct regular site visits. In fact, NACEP Standard C3 requires that “Faculty Liaisons conduct site visits to observe course content and delivery, student discourse and rapport” (NACEP, 2020, p. iii). Also referred to as “classroom observations,” these site visits generally involve a FL going into a CEI’s classroom to observe, and provide feedback on, how the teaching aligns with that in the college-level course. While FLs might not have experience or training in conducting classroom observations, CTLs do (Beach et al., 2016; Fletcher, 2018; Focarile et al, 2019). While the observations that FLs make of CEIs can be (and often are) evaluative in nature, CTLs can assist FLs by providing a more formative and reciprocal experience for their CEIs. At our institutions, we have supported FLs in their classroom observations in various ways.

### Boise State University

Teresa supported this aspect of the Boise State Concurrent Enrollment Program by:

- reviewing Classroom Visit Report forms submitted by FLs in order to identify common teaching concerns to address in the annual FL training;
- accompanying FLs on classroom visits in order to better understand the classroom context and provide relevant support for both CEIs and FLs; and
- facilitating trainings on how to do classroom observations.

In addition, Teresa updated the Classroom Visit Form at Boise State to more clearly articulate the alignment with the NACEP standards and provide FLs and CEIs with clear guidelines for what would be looked for during the visit.

### University of Findlay

At Findlay, Christine worked with the Lead FL to help acquaint FLs to the CTL’s classroom observation process adapted from the Danielson Framework for Teaching (2023). First, Christine and the Lead FL modified the existing CEI Classroom Visit Form to better align with the on-campus classroom observation process, as well as the NACEP standards. They then coached the FLs on how to conduct a site visit that was formative in nature, with attention to how CEIs plan for instruction, build rapport with students, deliver content, and reflect on their teaching

practices. The CTL has been integral in helping FLs approach site visits as opportunities in which colleagues can learn from and with one another. In the future, the CTL and Lead FL would like to enhance this process by inviting the CEIs to campus to visit the classrooms of their FL counterparts. Like those in Bishop-Clark et al.'s (2010) study, many Findlay FLs have found the benefits of the FL-CEI relationship evolving from a "mentoring relationship" to "more of a 'two colleagues sharing information relationship'" (p. 89). In other words, through this formative approach the FLs and CEIs are better positioned to share an equitable mentorship as described by Conrey and Nappa-Carroll (2021) where the FLs "*learn from and alongside* the CEIs" (Denecker, 2023, p. 59, original italics).

## Recommendations

Based on our review of the literature and NACEP standards, and our experience supporting FLs, we recommend that Concurrent Enrollment Programs partner with their CTLs to:

- align syllabi and other course materials;
- share and/or create aligned assessment measures;
- plan and implement new CEI course-specific orientation;
- plan and implement annual discipline-specific professional development; and
- establish clear guidelines and practices for conducting site visits.

In addition to these supports, CTLs can assist in underscoring the potential for reciprocal, reflective learning among high school and college professionals who work together in DE spaces. We recommend that CEIs and FLs approach the work as colleagues in learning much like those participants in Portland State University's Spanish Challenge Program, where secondary and postsecondary educators "participate in biannual workshops (fall and spring) that focus on discipline specific professional development" (Sloan, 2019, p. 265). These collaborative workshops are designed so CEIs and FLs can "focus on strategies to enhance student performance, heighten teacher effectiveness, and improve content-based instruction" (ibid). Research demonstrates the power of effective instructors in "transforming students into powerful learners" (Rendon, 1994, p. 39); this point is particularly important in supporting the learning achievement of underrepresented and minoritized groups (Farrell & Seifert, 2007). Similarly, like Hanson, Prusha, & Iverson (2015), we call for further research into the impact of joint high school-college professional development on college faculty.

We also want to acknowledge that not all institutions that offer DE courses have a dedicated CTL. In those cases, there are still likely groups of colleagues working at the institution in roles that support effective teaching and learning strategies, and these experts can be tapped to provide support for CEIs. These might include Faculty Governance, the Office of Academic Affairs or Provost's Office, an office of online teaching and learning, an assessment committee, college-level faculty support staff, and/or informal teaching networks that might exist on campus.

Furthermore, in the absence of a CTL, a variety of resources speak specifically to the work of supporting CEIs. For example, NACEP's issue briefs on *Initial Course-Specific Training*, *Discipline-Specific Professional Development*, and *The Classroom Visits* are both good starting points for building instructional training and support for CEIs.

## Conclusion

Dual Enrollment is disrupting education in important and profound ways. Among its positive outcomes is proof of participants' likelihood to graduate high school and enroll in some form of postsecondary education. Just as important is Dual Enrollment's potential to open educational access to students who previously did not see post-secondary coursework as part of their life's journey. With that said, those who work in Dual Enrollment programs have a profound responsibility to ensure that all students are provided with meaningful college experiences—and Concurrent Enrollment Instructors are integral to that work. According to Olwell (2022), Dual Enrollment programs require “visionary leadership” (p.15); Centers for Teaching and Learning can help provide that leadership by lending their expertise to Concurrent Enrollment Programs, and by supporting the educators who provide the foundation for these programs' success.

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